Altona Yacht Club

Water Activities Policy

Policy 16

Version 1.0

1. Purpose

This policy seeks to provide guidance to Instructors, Officers Of The Day (OOD) and members for safe activities during club sailing, Tackers, Learn to Sail courses, special events, functions, and other club-related activities where environmental factors may cause additional risks. Itrepresents our club's commitment to its members, volunteers, and visitors, acknowledging the role that sporting clubs and associations play in ensuring healthy communities.

This policy will help to ensure our club:

- Meets its duty of care in relation to the health and safety of our members, volunteers and visitors who attend any club events, special functions, and other activities.
- Upholds the reputation of our club.
- Understands the risks associated with poor water quality, poor air quality, extreme temperatures and strong wind, and our role in minimising risk.
- Educates our members about environmental risks.

2. Rationale - Environmental Risks

2.1. Water Quality

Stormwater runoff is the main cause of poor water quality in Port Phillip Bay. During and after rainfall water that falls around roads washes pollutants into the Bay. Children, older people and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk of getting sick from polluted water. Swimming and participating in water-based activities such as sailing and fishing in polluted waterways can expose participants to some types of microbes that make you sick. A microbe is a tiny organism such as bacteria and viruses which originate from: sewage overflows, stormwater drains, animal faecal matter and litter. Gastroenteritis (gastro) is the most common health issue caused by swimming in polluted poor water quality. It is also possible to get skin, eye or nose infections.

2.2. Air Quality

Smoke from fires and dust storms are the two main atmospheric conditions for which you may need to consider the air quality to determine if a Club activity, such as sailing, Learn-to-Sail or Tackers programs should be revised or cancelled. To a lesser extent, but also a possible issue for some is a localised industrial fire and thunderstorm asthma. The intensity of the health affect is multiplied if the participant is exerting themselves undertaking effort and energy when exercising.

2.3. Bushfire Smoke

Smoke from bushfires is made up of small particles, gases, and water vapor. The particles are very small - up to 1/30th the diameter of an average human hair - and are not visible to the human eye. The gases in bushfire smoke include carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds. Fine smoke particles are known to affect the human breathing system. The smaller or finer the particles, the deeper they go into the lungs. These particles can cause a variety of health problems, such as itchy or burning eyes, throat irritation, runny nose, and illnesses such as bronchitis. The smoke particles can also aggravate existing lung conditions, such as chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and asthma.

2.4. Dust Storms

Dust storms are natural events and are common in parts of the world with dryland areas. Periods of severe and widespread drought can dramatically increase the likelihood of major dust storms, particularly during the summer months. Dust storms reduce air quality and visibility, and may have adverse effects on health, particularly for people who already have breathing-related problems. Dust particles vary in size from coarse (non-inhalable), to fine (inhalable), to very fine

(respirable). These smaller particles have a greater potential to cause serious harm to your health. The most common symptoms experienced during a dust storm are irritation to the eyes and upper airways. Dust storms can trigger allergic reactions, asthma attacks and cause serious breathing-related problems. Prolonged exposure to airborne dust can lead to chronic breathing and lung problems, and possibly heart disease.

2.5. Extreme Temperature

Heatwaves and extreme temperatures occur seasonally throughout Victoria and are characterised by minimum and maximum temperatures being much higher for extended times.
Prolonged exposure and excessive exercise during periods of extreme temperatures can cause heat stress or illness; this is characterized by nausea, dizziness, vomiting and fainting. By understanding causes of heat illness Instructors, coaches, race officials and members can prevent it.

2.6. Strong Wind

Wind speed and direction are measured over a 10-minute period and the average is reported as the average wind. The gusts during a 10-minute period are typically 40% higher than the average wind speed. Strong wind conditions pose increased risks to sailing activities and the skill level of sailors and participants should be considered when deciding to sail. Thunderstorms are a particular risk due to possible multiple strong fronts passing overhead.

3. Monitoring and Forecasting Environmental Risks

3.1. Water Quality - EPA Beach report

The Environmental Protection Authority forecasts water quality for 36 beaches in Port Phillip Bay and issues alerts when there is an issue affecting a waterbody in Victoria.
The Beach report is a quick as easy tool and provides key information on;

- Water pollution levels at the nearest monitoring site
- Specific information for people more at risk from exposure to water pollution
- Simple steps on protection from these risks

The beach report does not provide guidance on the effects of long-term exposure to water pollution.

3.2. Air Quality – Index (AQI)

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is an index for reporting daily and hourly air quality. It is an indication of how clean or polluted the air is in areas across VIC.
The AQI is a quick and provides key information on:

- Air pollution levels at your nearest monitoring site or region
- Specific information for people more at risk from exposure to short-term air pollution
- Simple steps to take to protect yourself and others from these risks

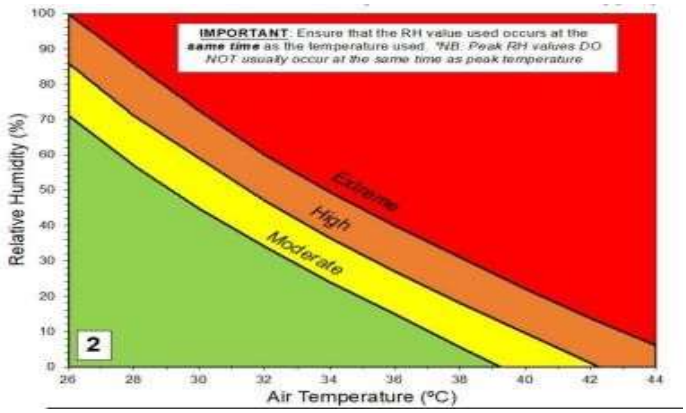
The AQI does not provide guidance on the effects of long-term exposure to air pollution. The AQI in Victoria is obtained from the EPA and AYC will use the IQAir App as a reference since this App is quick and easy to access and gives the AQI rating. Air Quality will vary based on environmental changes on any one day and could change significantly in a short timeframe so monitoring of the local environment is best maintained. Air Quality Index via IQ Air can be accessed via its website or its smart phone/Tablet app.

AQI	Guidelines
Good 0-50	Enjoy activities
Moderate 51-100	Enjoy activities
Unhealthy/Sensitive groups 101-150	**People sensitive to air pollution:** Plan strenuous outdoor activities when air quality is better
Unhealthy 151-200	**AIR POLUTION HEALTH ALERT** **Sensitive Groups**: Cut back or reschedule strenuous outdoor activities
Very Unhealthy 201-300	**AIR POLUTION HEALTH ALERT** **Sensitive groups:** Avoid strenuous outdoor activities **Everyone**: Cut back or reschedule strenuous outdoor activities
Hazardous 301-500	**AIR POLUTION HEALTH ALERT** **Sensitive groups:** Avoid all outdoor physical activities **Everyone:** Cut back or avoid outdoor physical activities

3.3. Extreme Temperature

Temperature forecasts are released by the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and are reported as daily minimum and maximum temperature in degrees Celsius. In addition, BOM provides a 3 hourly temperature forecast and will release heatwave warnings. Sports Medicine Australia (SMA) divides sports into 5 risk categories for heat illness, 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest risk group. Sailing is in risk group 2, specific risk levels can be calculated by into the predicted temperature and relative humidity (RH) into the SMA heat stress graph for sport risk group 2.

Refer to Extreme Temperature Table and actions.



3.4. Strong Wind

Based on this 40% rule the table below shows the potential gust that could be expected at various forecasted average wind speeds. Wind forecasts and wind warnings are produced by BOM in addition to real time average wind speeds.

Average Wind Speed (knots)	Gust Strength (Knots)	Wind Warning Thresholds
10	14	
15	21	
20	28	
26-33	36-45	Strong Wind Warning Issued
34-47	48-65	Storm Force Warning Issued.

3.5. General principles

This policy applies for all activities organised by the club, including but not limited to sailing events, Learn-to-Sail programs, Tackers Family and Junior fleet activities and Tackers courses.

Our club will:

- Check each environmental risk as part of the process of risk assessment before starting any Club activities.
- Alert Members and guests to increased risks on the day, so that individuals can make informed decision around their participation in club activities.
- Move activities onshore or inside if possible or cancel/postpone activities until another available day when the environmental risk has improved to the extent that allows activities to go ahead.

4. Risk Levels for Club Activities

4.1. Water Quality

Beach Report Category	EPA Guide	Actions
Good	Suitable for Swimming	**Enjoy Activities as planned**
Fair	May not be suitable for swimming	**Activities Continue as planned** Advise all participants that water quality is fair and if in a higher risk category inform instructors or OOD. Instructors to adjust the program where possible to avoid swimming.
Poor	Not suitable for swimming	**Modify Activities** Advise all participants that water quality is poor and if in a higher risk category inform instructors or OOD. Instructors or OOD may adjust the program to reduce risk of capsize. If a participant falls in water i.e. capsize, Instructors or OOD to inform participant to shower and change clothes and ensure no water was swallowed.
Illegal	City bylaws prevent swimming	**Cancel On water Activities** Advise all participants that water quality is Illegal and that all on water activities are cancelled. Instructors or OOD should modify activities that can operate on shore.

4.2. Air Quality

AQI Category	EPA Guide	Actions
Good 0-50	Good	**Enjoy Activities as planned**
Moderate 51-100	Moderate	**Activities Continue as planned** Advise all participants that air quality is poor and if feeling short of breath to notify the instructors. Instructors to adjust the program where possible if considered that it is affecting the participants. Instructors to closely monitor participants who have been identified as asthmatic. Alternate activities maybe given to reduce the amount of physical exertion of the Person, such as letting the person ride in the rescue craft.
Unhealthy/Sensitive groups 101-150	Poor	**AIR POLLUTION HEALTH ALERT** Monitor all participants. Instructors may adjust the program where appropriate and reduce time outdoors. Turn air conditioners on to help clear inside air
Unhealthy 151-200	Very Poor	**AIR POLLUTION HEALTH ALERT** Limit outdoor activity to no more than 1 hour at a time and go inside frequently to get a break. Turn air conditioners on to help clear inside air. Indoor activities and games.
Very Unhealthy 201-300		**AIR POLLUTION HEALTH ALERT** Immediately go indoors and stay there. All outdoor strenuous activities cancelled.
Hazardous 301-500	Hazardous	**AIR POLLUTION HEALTH ALERT** Immediately go indoors and stay there. All outdoor strenuous activities cancelled.

4.3. Extreme Temperature

SMA Heat Illness Risk Level	Actions
Low Risk (Green)	Hydrate and wear appropriate clothing. Drink regularly throughout exercise Select light breathable clothing.
Moderate Risk (Yellow)	Follow low risk action and in addition: Race committee and Instructors should consider the need to shorted courses and reduce exposure of participants to the heat.
High Risk (Orange)	Follow low and moderate risk actions and in addition take actions to reduce the incidence of heat stress: Drink cold fluids or icy poles Submerse arms/legs in cold water. Water dousing – wet skin with sponge Place ice pack or damp towel behind neck.
Extreme Risk (Red)	All sailing activities should be suspended.

5. Strong Wind

Average Wind Speed (Knots)	Risk Level and Wind Warning	Sailing Experience	Actions
<10	Low	All – Tacker/Junior/Novice/Fleet	Monitor wind but continue sailing activities as normal
<16	Moderate	Junior/Fleet	• If possible, reef sails for Tackers and Novice or considered alternative on shore activities. • Not suitable 16 knots or above for tackers
16 - 20	High	Fleet	• Not suitable for Tackers, Novice or older sailors. • Consider preliminary review limit of 18Knots for older, lighter or less experienced sailors (including novices). • Consider alternative onshore activities for Junior Sailors • All sailors and participants are advised to consider risks associated with on water activities and sail at own risk.
22+	Extreme *Strong Wind Warning		• Not suitable for all sailors, cancel all on water activities.

5.1. Tackers and Learn-to-Sail Courses

Tackers and Learn-to-Sail courses are designed so that if, due to adverse weather conditions, outdoor activities are cancelled or restricted for a significant part of the course it is still possible to cover the essential components. Instructors will adjust their program to suit the weather and conditions.

6. References

- Beach Report (https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/summer-water-quality/beach- report)
- EPA Summer Water Quality website (https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/summer-water-quality)
- Air Quality Index (https://aqicn.org/map/melbourne)
- EPA Air Watch website (https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/epaairwatch)
- Victorian Emergency Services Website (https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au)
- Bureau of Meteorology 3 hourly forecast (Williamstown Weather - Bureau of Meteorology (bom.gov.au)
- Sports Medicine Australia extreme heat policy (Microsoft Word - Hot Weather Guidelines web download doc 2007.doc (sma.org.au)
- Bureau of Meteorology Wind fact sheet (Wind - Reference material - Marine Knowledge Centre (bom.gov.au))
- Bureau of Meteorology forecast

7. Recommendations

Whilst engaging in Club activities, members, volunteers, and visitors will:

- Accept responsibility for their own behaviour, use good judgment and take a responsible approach towards on-water activities if environmental risks are present.
- Postpone on-water activities and make alternative arrangements on-shore or postpone activities to another day when environmental risk has improved.
- Consider catching up on training curriculums on good days by extending the day or rearranging any lost day with an additional day at the end of the course or at another time to be advised.
- Should a refund of course fees be necessary it should be on a prorate basis less a deduction for any course material costs.

8. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains relevant to Club operations and reflects both community expectations, latest scientific information and legal requirements. The review shall take reference from our peak body, Australian Sailing.

9. Approval

This Policy was approved at the Committee of Management Meeting on 12th December 2023.